

Cookin' on the road

Michigan is dishing out an ample menu of agri- a culinary-tourism offerings, echoing an internatio trend on experiential travel.

By Tai Alexander

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With agriculture and tourism as the state's second and third largest industries, options are on the grow.

Based in Petoskey, Learn Great Foods (www.learngreatfoods.com) partners with Northern Michigan farmers, restaurants and country inns to create savory retreats such as Maple Madness, Forest Flavors, Wild Waters and Greens Galore, which take groups out in the field and then into the kitchen.

Would-be chefs will enjoy one of the many cooking classes at Chateau Chantal Winery B&B (www.chataeuchantal.com) on Old Mission Peninsula in Traverse City. Topics range from soups and sauces to meats and baked goods. The Wine Immersion Seminar also includes a vineyard walk, peasant's lunch, cellar tour, wine tasting and gourmet wine dinner.

Traverse City (www.visittraversecity.com) has developed a self-guided foodie tour visitors can meet and chat with local butchers and fishermen, cheesemakers and bakers, chocolatiers and ice cream makers, as well as brewers, winemakers and distillers.

Michigan's West Coast, a three-county region encompassing the Lake Michigan shoreline from Holland to Muskegon and inland to Grand Rapids, offers eight themed coasting routes online — including a "Countryside route to wineries and farm markets," and "Culinary Arts" tour to fine restaurants.

The cities of Detroit, Royal Oak and Birmingham are drumming up fans with Culinary Escapes (www.culinary-escapes.com). These walking tours take visitors along the streets of Southeastern Michigan, sampling the area's ethnic cuisine, meeting local producers and supporting independent eatery owners.

Learn more about the newly formed Michigan Culinary Tourism Alliance at www.michigan.gov/mda.

Tai Alexander is a West Michigan-based freelance writer. To read more stories from Michigan BLUE's Waterways section, pick up our Spring 2010 issue.

